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LETTER DATED 29 MARCH 1993 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF AZERBAIJAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On behalf of my Government, I have the honour to inform you about the latest round of the informal consultations of the Minsk Group of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) on the establishment of peace in the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic and the surrounding area, which was held under the chairmanship of Italy in Geneva from 17 to 23 March.

The concept put forward by the Azerbaijani delegation, headed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tofik Gasymov, was based on a desire to achieve a genuine peaceful settlement and to move on to peaceful negotiations within the framework of the Minsk Conference. In this connection, it proposed a plan for a settlement which called for the full demilitarization of Nagorny Karabakh and other nearby territories in Azerbaijan prior to the Minsk Conference. This proposal would exclude the factor of military force and its negative impact on the course of peaceful negotiations, and would provide an opportunity for the normalization of life in the region and establish conditions for the return of displaced persons to their places of permanent residence.

The proposals by the Azerbaijani delegation included the following:

- Disarming and disbanding of irregular armed units prior to the Minsk Conference and identification and withdrawal of foreign military personnel;

- Monitoring of heavy armaments in order to prevent their use;

- Withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the territory of the Lachin district of Azerbaijan and establishment of control on the frontier between Armenia and Azerbaijan (by the Armenians on the Armenian side and by the Azerbaijanis on the Azerbaijani side). International control may be established only in order to ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance by Armenia to Nagorny Karabakh, with the agreement of the Government of Azerbaijan, and to ensure the return of displaced persons to their places of residence.

During the talks the Armenian delegation pursued its own aims, which mainly consisted in maintaining in the territory of the Azerbaijani Republic both the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia and the armed formations of Armenians from the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic, which they support. The proposed maintenance of the situation in the region means in practice that Armenia would retain control over the regions of Azerbaijan now occupied by Armenian armed formations. The implementation of this approach would mean that there would be an opportunity to exert pressure on the Azerbaijani side during the Minsk Conference.

The demilitarization proposal put forward by Azerbaijan was rejected by Armenia. In justification, it was argued that the proposal did not provide guarantees for the security of the Armenian population of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. In that connection, the Armenian side failed to mention the need for similar guarantees for the security of the Azerbaijani population of Nagorny Karabakh. The Azerbaijani delegation, for its part, declared that the security of the inhabitants of Nagorny Karabakh, both Armenians and Azerbaijanis, can be guaranteed only by the disbanding of the armed formations, the presence of foreign observers and the guarantees given by the Azerbaijani Government.

As the results of the meeting in Geneva show, the achievement of a compromise entails great difficulties and will require intense negotiations; however, the goal that has been set is worth this. Although a final timetable has not yet been worked out for action to establish peace in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan and the surrounding area, it is gratifying that the talks are continuing. A mutually acceptable result can be attained only if there is a sincere desire by the parties to achieve such a result within the framework of the negotiating process. The Azerbaijani side once again reaffirms its commitment to this approach.

Azerbaijan greatly appreciates the support and deep concern of the Security Council and the Secretary-General in connection with the establishment of peace on Azerbaijani soil. We share the view expressed in the documents of the Security Council and in the recent letter from the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, addressed to the President of the Azerbaijani Republic, Mr. Abulfaz Elchibey, concerning the need to bring the Minsk process within the framework of CSCE to a logical conclusion. We are writing to you in the hope that the efforts of CSCE to resolve the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorny Karabakh region of the Azerbaijani Republic and the delicate results achieved in Rome and Geneva will continue to receive your full support.

The Azerbaijani side intends to continue the search for ways to achieve a political settlement of the conflict during the further round of talks between Armenia and Azerbaijan, scheduled to begin in Geneva on 2 April 1993.

(Signed) Hassan HASSANOV
Permanent Representative